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ABSTRACT

Although altered by government and religious sanctions since the establishment of reservations in 1878, the Omaha dance still serves as an obtrusive demonstration of tribal identity and cohesion for the Oglala and Sicangu Sioux. The dance achieved a high level of prominence as a successful celebration for petitioning supernatural protection in warfare just before reservations were established when warfare activities ceased. The dance's popularity heightened as it became a means for breaking reservation monotony. Audiences enjoyed the Omaha dance when it was incorporated into the growing number of wild west shows, including Buffalo Bill's. The international travel and adventure attracted many Native Americans to employment in those shows. These shows brought about dance innovations and changes. Missionaries and reformers condemned the Omaha dance as superstitious, immoral and counter to civilizing efforts. In 1883, the federal government issued "Indian Offenses" codes targeted at war dances. Wild west shows and further dance-suppressing acts and lobbyists often came into conflict. In 1922 a further increase in restrictions met with an outcry from many tribes and their supporters, including the American Indian Defense Association, and efforts to solve this crisis led to a compromise which sanctioned federal regulation of ritual while acknowledging native religious freedom. Dance regulations continued to 1934. Now significantly altered and often abbreviated for non-Indian audiences, Omaha dancing remains important for cultural identity. (PM)

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THE OMAHA DANCE IN OGLALA AND SICANGU SIOUX HISTORY, 1883-1923

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May 27, 1983

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For generations, the Omaha dance serving as an obtrusive demonstration of tribal identity and cohesion has been the most popular social and nationalistic celebration of the Oglala and Sicangu Sioux.[1] Reformers and progressive Sioux[2] historically recognized the dance as a barrier to "civilizing" the Sioux and attempted to suppress it. Many entrepreneurs and traditionalists with the contrary views promoted the dance. When the last federal dance orders were issued in 1923, the Omaha dance was still thriving. Historical events affected its significance and form, but not its vitality.

During the last decade prior to the establishment of reservations,[3] the dance had achieved prominence as a successful celebration for petitioning supernatural protection in warfare activities. The dance was the property of the Omaha society

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[1]The Oglala and Sicangu bands respectively, populate the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations in southwest South Dakota. Upon establishment in 1878, their combined populations were 13,000. Other bands reside on reservations scattered across five states and three Canadian provinces. The Omaha dance is a part of a wholistic group of activities known as the "Indian way," including all secular and sacred acts, actions, and mannerisms of Indian cultural origin. Although extensively secularized by 1923, significant sacred elements remained in the Omaha dance.

[2]The terms "reformers" and "progressive Sioux" respectively identified non-Indians involved with preparing natives for assimilation into American life and Sioux, predominatly former boarding school students, who cooperated with the effort.

[3]According to winter counts, the ceremony was adopted by the Oglala, Sicangu, and other Teton bands in the years 1860-1865. They apparently received the ceremony from the Yankton, who in turn received it from either the Omaha or Ponca tribes, hence the name, Omaha dance. James H. Howard, "Notes on the Dakota Grass Dance," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 79(1951):82; Clark Wissler, "Societies and Ceremonial Associations in the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota," Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 11(1912)49; and Big Missouri, winter count, Holy Rosary Mission Records, Marquette University.

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a man's organization. Accordingly, participation was restricted to society members and their families. Certain sacred badges of distinction[4] were reserved for outstanding members. Prominent features of the celebration included dancing, oratory, give-aways, a ritual drama, and feast. The song, oratory, and dance pantomine aroused a patriotic fervor while warfare achievements and victories were reenacted. Giveaways, public distributions of gifts by hosts and other prominent persons, served to reinforce social relationships and demonstrate generosity. All ceremonies climaxed with a ritual drama or battle dance, which included a flamboyant display of dancing with warriors dramatically vanquishing the enemy, symbolized by a pail of cooked dog meat. Typically, celebrations also served as protracted social affairs, and lasted well into the night.[5]

Reservation Life

With the establishment of reservations in 1878 and cessation of warfare activities, prayer intentions seeking protection in battle were no longer appropriate. Petitions for good health, sermons on righteous conduct, and new inspirational songs became popular, having special appeal among the younger generation.[6]

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[4]These objects were the roach, a crest shaped headdress made of porcupine and red dyed deer hair, and the crow belt or bustle, an assemblage of eagle and other bird of prey feathers symbolizing a battlefield.

[5]James H. Howard and Peter LeClaire, The Ponca Tribe, Bulletin 195, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 49-52 and 108-109; William K. Powers, "The Sioux Omaha Dance," American Indian Tradition 8(ca. 1962): 24-27; and Wissler, "Societies and Ceremonial Associations," pp. 42-49.

[6]Howard and LeClaire, The Ponca Tribe, p. 107; Wissler, "General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies," Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 11 (New York, 1916): 869-871; and Francis Densmore, Teton Sioux Music, Bulletin 61, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918) p. 22.

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Because they had been reared for participation in the old order, many young men had great difficulty in adjusting to the new socio-economic conditions they encountered. A few opted for suicide, while many became preoccupied with rejuvenated ceremonies. Especially on Sundays and occasions of intertribal visitations, the Omaha dance became an important activity. This lead to its adoption by many tribes beyond the Sioux. Dance remained perhaps the most viable surviving prereservation activity and virtually the only available leisure activity.[7]

Prior to the 1883 ban of the sun dance, the fourth of July had already become a popular Sioux celebration.[8] Both celebrations initially held on approximately the same days, provided social relief from the dull monotony of reservation life and a special occasion for intertribal visitations. After 1883, several sun dance activities were continued as a part of the independence day fete, including parades, mock battles, giveaways, and the Omaha dance. The latter, highlighted with giveaways, became the dominant afternoon and evening activity.

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[7]Nicholas Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, John G. Neidhardt, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 218-229; Charles A. Eastman to A.L. Krober, June 26, 1895, Carlos Montezuma Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Microfilm Reel 1); Wissler, ibid.; and Densmore, ibid.

[8]George E. Hyde, Spotted Tail's Folk: A History of the Brule Sioux (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 298.

Throughout the three to eight day event, good humor and orderly conduct was conspiously evident, contrasting with the drunken brawls known in the frontier towns.[9]

In 1882 a new mode of popular entertainment began at the North Platte, Nebraska July Fourth celebration under the direction of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody. "Buffalo Bill" initiated his travelling wild west show two years later.[10]

Audiences especially liked the Omaha dance, billed in

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[9]Amos Bad Heart Bull, A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux, Helen H. Blish, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. 42-43. 1898 is given as the year for the first Pine Ridge July fourth celebration. This is an incredibly late date compared to Rosebud Reservation; Rex E. Beach, "The Great Sioux Festival", Appleton's Booklovers Magazine, September, 1905, p.308: 1905 July Fourth Pine Ridge visitors are identified as Cheyenne and Arapahoe from Oklahoma and Wisconsin Winnebago; George Bushotter,"A Dakota's Account of the Sun Dance,"in James O. Dorsey, ed., "A Study of Siouan Cults," Eleventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 463; Powers, ibid.; Luther Standing Bear, My People the Sioux (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 114; Wissler, Red Man Reservations (New York: Collier Books, 1971), pp. 30-35; Mrs. John W. Evans, "How the Sioux Celebrate the Fourth," Sunday World Herald (Omaha), August 31, 1902; Morning World Herald (Omaha), July 5, 1902; Scudder Mekeel, "A Discussion of Cultural Change as illustrated by Material Culture From a Teton-Dakota Community," American Anthropologist 34(1932): 281-283.

[10]Don Russell, The Wild West or a History of the Wild West Shows (San Antonio: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970), pp. 1-2, 12 and 32; and H.D. Gallagher, Pine Ridge Agency report, August 28, 1890, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), pp. 50-51.

the show as the "war dance,"[11] and performed by contingents of hired Indians. Since each show number lasted less than ten minutes, only brief dancing renditions were given. Throughout the six month travelling season, shows were given twice daily before North American and European audiences.[12] In at least one instance, local natives contributed to the show when it played in a community adjacent to several reservations. In 1896 at Ashland, Wisconsin, a special train transported to town ten coaches full of area Chippewas. Following the afternoon show, the Chippewa and Sioux, two great former

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[11]War dances or ceremonies which had an association with armed hostilities were very popular with non-Indian audiences. The Omaha dance in rejuvenated form was identified as a war dance and frequently used to satisfy the popular demand. Many other war dances, now disfunctional, were diminishing in use. Digmann, History of St. Francis Mission, 1886-1922, p. 5, Holy Rosary Mission Records, Marquette University; Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Pawnee Bill's Far East, Season 1910, Season 1911; Gooch, ed., Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Season 1900 (Kansas City: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1900), pp. 23, 25, 40, and 78; W. H. Clapp, Pine Ridge Agency report, July 9, 1899, quoted by W. A. Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1899, pp. 41-42; Russell, The Wild West, p.97, reprint ca. 1915-1916, Buffalo Ranch Real Wild West poster featuring the "real Indian war dance," Amon Carter Museum; Bad Heart Bull, A Pictographic History, p.79; Henry W. Hamilton and Jean T. Hamilton, The Sioux of the Rosebud, A History in Pictures (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971) p. 137; Evans, Sunday World Herald, August 31, 1902; Digmann, Rosebud Reservation missionary report, September 23, 1892, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 375;. Martin Marty to anonymous, July 1, 1882, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records, Marquette University (Box 5 folder 4); and Wissler, "Societies and Ceremonial Associations," pp. 49 and 62-63.

[12]Gooch, ed., Buffalo Bill's Season 1899; Gooch, ed., Buffalo Bill's Season 1900, pp. 23, 25, and 40; Buffalo Bill's Season 1902, p. 27; and Russell, The Wild West, p. 25

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adversaries, concluded a ceremonial peace agreement which the showman Cody refused to commercialize.[13] Show sites frequently coincided with local celebrations to enhance attendance. The Buffalo Bill show flanked the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition and played a most successful 186 straight days. Few of the over 27 thousand visitors felt that they had seen the sights until they had also visited Buffalo Bill's Wild West.[14]

A desire for adventure, excitement, and learning "white man" lifeways attracted many Native Americans to show employment. Initially, in the Buffalo Bill show, contingents were recruited almost exclusively from the Pine Ridge Reservation. Prominent veterans of former conflicts with the United States became stars including many Oglalas such as Red Cloud, Iron Tail, and American Horse. Most performers however, were the young men. At first, all contingents were small in size with as few as twenty-five members. After Buffalo Bill's successful European and American tour of 1887 market demand encouraged competitors to enter the arena. New companies such as Gordon W. Lillie's Pawnee Bill show and the Kickapoo Medicine Company

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[13]Daily News (Ashland, Wisconsin), September 11, 1896, quoted by Edmund J. Danziger, Jr., The Chippewas of Lake Superior (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), p. 109; Guy M. Burnham, The Last Great Peace Treaty Between the Chippewa and the Sioux, WPA Indian History Project, Veterbo College; and Burham, Colonel Cody Discusses Chippewa-Sioux Peace Treaty, WPA Indian History Project.

[14]Gooch, ed., Buffalo Bill's Season 1900, p.50; and Russell, The Wild West, p. 43.

rapidly expanded the call for show Indians. Recruiters searched both Dakotas for qualified employees. In 1889 the Pine Ridge agent reported his reservation appeared to be the favorite recruitment field with over 200 young men currently employed by different shows.[15] By the next year, Charles P. Jordan, a Rosebud Reservation trader was recruiting local talent for Cody's show. Within five years Jordon developed his own show which played at expositions nationwide. His spectacle at the 1897 Zoological Gardens Exposition in Cincinnati featured 91 Rosebud Sioux and 50 ponies.[16]

While maintaining Omaha dance renditions as standard show features, audience and management approval encouraged the use of flamboyant dance movements without regard to the representation of former war exploits. In 1887, to gain royal approval while preforming before the future English King Edward VII, Luther Standing Bear reported following Cody's suggestion of including exceptionally spectacular dance movements. Following a season of new experiences, dancers returned

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[15]D.M. Browning, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 16, 1893, p. 59; Browining, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 14, 1894, p. 60; H.D. Gallagher, Pine Ridge Agency report, August 27, 1889, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 153; and Russell, The Wild West, p. 50.

[16]Browning, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 14, 1895, p. 55; and Hamilton and Hamilton, The Roesebud Sioux, pp. 133-139.

home with heightened self esteem and new dancing innovations.[17]

Wild west shows had a considerable impact on customs. Reminiscent of pre-reservation warrior customs, the commencement and conclusion of many show seasons became a time of celebration when contenders for employment, performers, and their friends and relatives gathered at Rushville, Nebraska, a railroad station near Pine Ridge Reservation. Through competitive dancing eliminations at the pre-season gathering, the Indian contingent leader selected his performers, using dancing form, ability, and appearance of dancing apparel as criteria.[18] The increased demand for dancers, coupled with a high annual turnover, attracted the fancy of many Pine Ridge youth. An agent in 1899 added, "School boys speak longingly of the time when they will no longer be required to attend school, but can let their hair grow long, dance Omaha, and go off with shows."[19]

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[17]Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, pp. 218, 220-221 and 228-229; Standing Bear, My People the Sioux, pp. 255-256; Barbara W. Roth, "The 101 Ranch Wild West Show, 1904-1932," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 43(1965)422; Tyrone H. Stewart and Jerry Smith, The Oklahoma Feather Dancer (Tulsa: American Indian Craft and Culture, 1973) p. 3; and Ronald D. Theisz, KINI radio broadcast, November 7, 1980, St. Francis Mission Records, Marquette University (Audiotape reel 35)

[18]Black Elk, ibid.; Standing Bear, My People the Sioux, pp. 248, 269-270; and Mathias Schmidt to Ketcham, April 8, 1904, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 46 folder 5).

[19]Clapp, quoted by Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1899, pp. 41-42.

Missionaries and reformers condemned the Omaha dance as superstitious, immoral, and counter to civilizing efforts. Contrary to Sioux values, missionaries did not view celebrating as an intrinsic good. Rather, it was considered acceptable only as an occasional reward for labor. To the church, frequent dancing was evil and associated with the devil.[20] Traditional late night and sabbath day native dances, with their glorification of war deeds, were deemed immoral encouragements fostering violations of decency, chastity, and temperance. Homesteads were reportedly unattended and vulnerable to depredation from wild animals and thieves. Associated ritual customs, including the activities of shamen, were considered supersitious and discredited.[21] Supreme condemnation, however, was reserved for the giveaway. The extensive distribution of gifts and property was seen as a waste of hard earned subsistence, allowing the "lazy" to live off the labors of the prosperous and to disperse implements, seed and livestock necessary for establishing

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[20]Florentine Digmann, Rosebud Reservation missionary report, August 15, 1898, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 285; Timothy Corbett, "A Pastoral on the Dance Evil," Sina Sapa Wocekine Taenanpaha (Marty, South Dakota), April 15, 1934, p. 7.

[21]Moses N. Adams, John P. Williamson, and John P. Renville, The History of the Dakota Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, p. 31, quoted by Mary C. Duratschek, Crusading Along Sioux Trails: A History of Catholic Indian Missions of South Dakota (Yankton, South Dakota: Grail Publications, 1947) pp. 258-259; Digmann, Rosebud Reservation missionary report, August 1, 1902, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 347; and Jas. G. Wright, Rosebud Agency report, August 15, 1883, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 43; Louis J. Goll, Jesuit Missions Among the Sioux (St. Francis, South Dakota: 1940), pp. 14-16; and Joseph F. Busch, Diocese of Lead report and application for aid, August 10, 1914, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 4 folder 2).

the Sioux as farmers and ranchers.[22]

In response to lobbying efforts reguarding the variety of aboriginal cultural remnants that impeded efforts to transform Indian life, the federal government issued a code of "Indian offenses" in 1883. The sun dance, war dance, and related ceremonies were specifically targeted.[23] The term "war dance" referred to all ceremonies formerly associated with armed hostilities including the popular Omaha dance.

Agents initially responded by making a show of enforcing the new rules, as political pressures dictated that the desires of government be satisfied. Enforcement was made possible by the subjugation of chieftain authority and the recent development of native agency police forces loyal to the agents.[24] It was reported that the sun dance, deemed the most barbarous ceremony by reformers, was effectively banned on Pine Ridge in 1883 and on the Rosebud the following year. War dance bans were apparently less effective and were enforced with latitude and discretion. Despite the proclaimed efficiency

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[22] V.T. McGillycuddy, Pine Ridge Agency report, October 15, 1879, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 40; and Jas. G. Wright, ibid.

[23] Regulations of the Indian Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), p. 89.

[24] A convenient political void had alread been created on Rosebud Reservation with the death of Chief Spotted Tail. On Pine Ridge, subjugation did not mean capitulation, as Chief Red Cloud maintained an adversary relationship with his agents.

of agency police in enforcing regulations and informing their agents of illegal activity, it was also necessary for agents to maintain peace and cooperation on their reservation. Dancing was allowed periodically, on the Fourth of July, and on special occasions.[25] Rosebud missionaries noted that war dance regulations "had little effect except in the immediate vicinity of the agency."[26] During the school year, only boarding school students were completely denied effective access to dances and ceremonies. In 1889, the Federal Sioux Commission, determined to secure Oglala and Sicangu permission to relinquish large tracts of territory, actively promoted feasting and war dancing. The Reverend W.J.Cleveland noted:

> even the Lord's Day was given over to these outrageous dances and General Crook [Commission Chairman] looked smilingly on.[27]

Later in 1899, Commissioner Morgan solicited agents' reports on the growing practice of show recruitment, with the

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[25] In 1883, Rosebud agent Wright forbad dancing on Sunday, adding that dancing on the Sabbath was more prevalent than any other day of the week: Rosebud Agency report, August 15, 1883, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 43. In 1890 he reported that dancing was restricted to one day per week: Ibid., August 26, 1890, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 62; Rosebud Reservation superintendent's narrative, September 26, 1920, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Microfilm reel 118); Pine Ridge Reservation superintendent's narrative, 1922 (Microfilm reel 106). Note that in later years the title agent was replaced by superintendent.

[26] Wissler, Red Man Reservations, pp. 17-19; and Life of Father Digmann, p. 22, St. Francis Mission Records.

[27] Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), pp. 199, 202-203, 211-213, and 216.

intent of modifying the appropriate Indian office policy. The replies confirmed his previous impressions that the performing of war dances and similar acts and the contact with the degrading vices of western civilization were not providing the desired exposure to European and American society as originally anticipated. Pine Ridge agent Gallagher also added that many Indian joined shows in defiance of orders and then were abandoned by employers at the season's end.[28]

Concurrently, Cody's show came under public attack while in Germany. A defector, one White Horse, told a tale of cruelty and starvation to the New York Herald. Following an immediate investigation by German authorities, the story was quickly refuted.[29]

The findings of the Indian Office led to a temporary halt in the approval of hiring applications, but Sioux show hopefuls experienced little disruption in employment opportunities. For four consecutive years, 1889-1892, the Buffalo Bill show, popular with commoners and royalty alike, played to packed houses in Europe.[30] Cody personally refuted the

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[28]Gallagher, ibid.

[29]Russell, The Wild West, pp. 37 and 39.

[30]Ibid., pp. 33-42.

cruelty charges in Washington, allowing for the development of a bonding system "...to ensure the proper payment and treatment of the Indians while away from their reservations.[31] For complying shows, such as Buffalo Bill's and Pawnee Bill's, procedures were followed free of complaint until 1899. Until the showing of the Greater American Exposition at Omaha that year, no attempt had been made by the federal government to prevent the performance of war dances and other ceremonies specified in the Indian code. The government's letter of agreement allowed the use of native participants, including 75 from Pine Ridge, but forbad dances. Missionaries report that they occurred regardless.[32]

Other reports of the year were also unfavorable to shows. On June 20, thirteen Rosebud Sioux were reportedly stranded in Berlin by an unauthorized showman who had smuggled the natives out of the United States by way of Montreal.[33] In his annual report, Pine Ridge agent Clapp argued that continued show engagements retarded civilizing efforts by teaching that

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[31]D.M. Browning, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 14, 1894, p. 59.

[32]W.A. Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 1, 1900, p. 39; Digmann to J.A. Stephan, September 30, 1898, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 36 folder 27); Russell, The Wild West, p. 64; and Mary A. Harriman, "The Congress of American Aborigines At the Omaha Exposition," Overland Monthly 33 (June, 1899): 505. It is here that F.A.Rinehart photographed his renowned Indian portraits.

[33]Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1899, p. 40.

dancing and other traditional customs had a market value conveying to the public an image that these performers were representative of all Indians.[34]

With the support of leading Indian reform activists, Clapp's remarks were an immediate concern of the Indian Office. Convinced that it could not legally prohibit off reservation show employment, the government abandoned its half-hearted regulating attempts outside reservation. All official show sanctions were removed, eliminating governments's tacit approval of shows. Future tactics were limited to on reservation law enforcement and persuasion.[35]

Missionaries and reformers labored for years to eliminate dancing from native life. They issued frequent complaints to the government, often naming the Omaha dance as the prime evil. Perhaps the only missionary expressing sensitivity to native dancing proclivities was the Reverend Francis M. Craft, a young energetic priest and one-eighth blood Mohawk or Seneca. Serving the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations from 1883 through 1885 and popular with Chief Spotted Tail[36] he was inducted into the Omaha society and participated in its ceremonies. Recognizing that the society's paramount virtues of generosity and brother-

[34]Clapp quoted by Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1899, pp. 41-42.

[35]William J. Rose, ed., Proceedings of the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, 1903 (New York: Lake Mohonk Conference, 1904), pp. 59-60.

[36]Craft was expelled by agent Wright for defiance of the agents authority. The priest is best known for his subsequent work in North Dakota and his eyewitness account of the Wounded Knee massacre. Duratschek, Crusading Along Sioux Trails, pp. 93-94, and Freeman's Journal (New York), December 20, 1890.

hood approximated the Christian counterparts, he did not discourage the dance. Rather, he sought to modify those portions not complying with Christian teaching and ritual.[37]

Other missionaries and their native lay catechists used a variety of active strategies to discourage native ceremonies. Sermons and religious instructions warned that traditional rites were superstitious and imperiled access to eternal salvation.[38] Men's and women's sodalities were organized. They prohibited participation in native ritual and supplanted traditional Sioux organizations as mutual aid societies. Annual denominational all Sioux convocations developed. Sioux delegates returned home with renewed enthusiasm for promoting the sodalities and Christian ideals, including the

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37 Life of Father Digmann, p. 22, St. Francis Mission Records.

38 Eugene Buechel sermons, delivered January 10, 1909, February 13, 1910, May 28, 1911, May 20, 1917 and November 11, 1917 on either the Pine Ridge or Rosebud Reservations, St. Francis Mission Records; Louis J. Goll, Jesuit Missions Among the Sioux, pp. 15-16, 29-30, 35; Albert Lacombe, The Two Roads (Montreal; C.O. Beauchemin and Sons, ca. 1850-1885), a pictorial catechism designed for Indians; Steven McNamara, "Black Elk and Brings White," The Indian Sentinel 21(1941) :139-140.

abolition of the Omaha dance and other traditional ceremonies.

Charging that agency fourth of July celebrations resulted in a revival of old Indian habits more than a teaching of patriotism, special efforts were made to dissuade participation in them. From 1891 to 1905 the Catholic convocation or Indian Congress was scheduled during the fourth of July. Protestant missionaries, while not scheduling their convocations at this time, developed alternative celebrations without traditional Indian features. Thousands of "progressive" Pine Ridge and Rosebud Sioux attended these competing events until they were discontinued in 1906, when the government withdrew approval of alternative July Fourth celebrations.[40]

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[39] James F. Cross, Rosebud Reservation missionary report, August 26, 1896, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 300; Digmann, September 23, 1892, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, pp. 468-469; Digmann, August 9, 1899, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 344; Sina Sapa Wocekine Taenanpaha (Fort Totten, North Dakota), August 15, 1906 and June 15, 1908 supplements: A Pine Ridge Convention resolution cited the giveaway as detrimental to progress, and abstention from "superstitious Indian customs" was listed among the men's and women's sodality admission rules; Wissler, Red Men Reservations, pp. 156 and 162; Goll, Jesuit Missions Among the Sioux, pp. 37-38; and William H. Hare, missionary Bishop Report, August 26, 1879, Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners for the Year 1879 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), p. 81.

It is interesting to note that while missionaries were suppressing the Omaha dance on the reservations, Pope Leo XII imparted his papal blessing on the Buffalo Bill show during the show cast's visit to the Vatican in 1890. Russell, The Wild West, p. 38, reproduced illustration from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, April 12, 1890.

[40] Digmann, September 23, 1892, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 469; Aaron B. Clark, Rosebud Reservation missionary report, August 5, 1899, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 345; Digmann, July 29, 1905, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 346; Daily Herald (Grand Forks), March 30, 1902, John Shanley, "The Beginnings of Catholicism"; Digmann to Ketcham, July 30, 1907, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 51 folder 9); and ibid., March 13, 1909 (Box 63 folder 4).

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By the turn of the century, Omaha dance popularity experienced a marked decline interrupted by intermittant revivals. Clergy claimed that renewed interest, sometimes blamed on lax dance rule enforcement, coincided with the temporary loss of Christian practice and new converts. Most elders were seen as steadfast in their dance practices. Missionaries viewed Indian youth as the main targets for change. Reformers attributed existing youth dance interest to initiatives from "non-progressive" elders and exposure to festive occasions and shows.[41] The prevailing view among agents was that contemporary policies preventing youth admissions were sufficient to cause the demise of the Omaha dance with the passing of the elder generation. It was argued that additional restrictions would be non-humanitarian. Moreover, the juvenile preoccupation with "white" dances and the growing enlightened spirit expressed by educated Indian youth and neighboring new white settlers would further contribute to the decline of dancing.[42]

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[41]Digmann to J.A. Stephen, September 30, 1898, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 36 folder 27); James F. Cross, 1895, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 301; M.K. Sniffen, Observations Among the Sioux (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1906), pp. 29-33; Richard H. Pratt to Carlos Montezuma, April 27, 1911, Carlos Montezuma Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Microfilm reel 2); and Busch, ibid.

[42]John H. Sterns, Rosebud Reservation superintendent's narrative, August 24, 1912 (Microfilm reel 118); Rosebud Reservation superintendent's narratives, 1913 and October 1, 1917 (Microfilm reel 118); Pine Ridge Reservation superintendent's narratives, 1913, 1915, and 1916, (Microfilm reel 106); Cato Sells, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1, 1915, p. 35; Thomas O'Gorman to Ketcham, December 1, 1906, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 51 folder 10); and O'Gorman to priests of the diocese, ibid.

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Anticipating the demise of the dance, the 1907 Rosebud July Fourth celebration was confidently billed by non-Indians as "probably... the last great celebration of the Sioux Nation and your last opportunity to see Indians in their old time war regalia." Ten thoudand Pine Ridge and Rosebud Sioux and visitors from other tribes were expected for this "final" tribute to Sioux heritage.[43] Government efforts to sell off large tracts of the Rosebud Reservation lands were well under way, which culminated in the opening of Tripp and Mellette Counties to white settlement in 1911 and 1912 respectively.[44]

While missionaries and agents successfully tempered Omaha dance popularity on the reservation, commercial dancing continued to thrive off the reservation. Indian reformers heightened their attacks, particularly on the economic exploitation consequently associated with Indian dancers. Frontier town saloon keepers were accused of making money as long as Indians had any; husbands and former students travelling

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[43] 1907 fourth of July poster, Indian Rights Association Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Microfilm reel 19).

[44] Jones, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 17, 1904, pp. 3-4; Rueben Quick Bear to Herbert Welch, January 18, 1904, Indian Rights Association Papers (Microfilm reel 16); Quick Bear to S.M. Brosius, Febuary 2, 1907, Indian Rights Association Papers (Microfilm reel 19); and accompanying maps, Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1908-1912.

with shows were described as frequently returning home penniless.[45] The concerns of reformers were well expressed by Pine Ridge agent Clapp when he reported that a typical dancer

> comes back to his home with an intimate knowledge of the seamy side of white civilization, his desire for change and excitement intensified, his all too faint aspirations for the benefits of civilization checked, if not destroyed [,] and with a conviction that the boasted morality of the whites is nothing to be proud of or to copy.[46]

Through the succeeding decades, the reservation practice of discretionary dance rule enforcement was persistently maintained. In 1912, the incumbent Rosebud agent wrote that the Fourth of July was still celebrated "to have just as good as time as possible." During the following year he added that other timed dancing was allowed only once per month. In 1915, his Pine Ridge counterpart permitted dances on special occasions during the agricultural growing season and twice per month during the remainder of the year. Except for occasional evasions of police surveilance, agents' orders prohibiting juvenile dance participation were successfully enforced.[47]

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[45] Mathias Schmidt to Ketcham, April 8, 1904, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 46 folder 5); and Henry Westropp to Ketcham, October 16, 1909, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 63 folder 3).

[46] Clapp, quoted by Jones, ibid.

[47] John H. Sterns, Rosebud superintendent's narrative, August 24, 1912, and Rosebud superintendent's narrative, September 19, 1916 (Microfilm reel 118); Pine Ridge superintendent's narratives, 1913 and August 17, 1918 (Microfilm reel 106); and Daily American Tribune (Dubuque), November 2, 1915.

After decades of exposure to American life, readjustments in Omaha dance custom continued. Clothing and adornment fashioned from white man's materials and adapted to Indian tastes were added to the dancer's garb. By the 1920's, few Sioux danced without extensive body coverings.[48] Many former dance customs had also been discontinued. Elders admitted young men to the dance without war veteran status. The use of religious features diminished as well. By 1910, regular use of the kettle dance had ceased and drums of commercial manufacture replaced drums embellished with native religious symbols.[49]

While reformers, agents, and a number of progressive Sioux were determined to eliminate the younger generation's native dance interests,[50] show participation attested to the

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[48]Michael S. Tucker, Old Time Sioux Dancers (Tulsa: American Indian Crafts and Culture, 1969), pp. 2 and 10.

[49]Howard and LeClaire, The Ponca Tribe, p. 107; Thomas Tyon, "Oglala Men's Societies, 1911-1912," Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Johnson, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 267; Powers, "The Sioux Omaha Dance," p. 24; Ronald D. Theisz, interview, Black Hills State College, November 15, 1982; and Hamilton and Hamilton, The Sioux of the Rosebud, pp. 168, 172-173, and 201; John A. Anderson, Omaha dance photographs, 1889, 1893, and 1900. Use of the kettle dance continued in association with the yuwipi ceremony, a traditional healing rite: Powers, Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), pp. 77-78.

[50]Richard H. Pratt to Thomas L. Sloan, April 27, 1911 and Pratt to Carlos Montezuma, April 28, 1911, Carlos Montezuma Papers (Microfilm reel 27); Quick Bear to Brosius, October 25, 1907, Indian Rights Association Papers (Microfilm reel 19); Chauncy Yellow Robe, "The Indian and the Wild West Show," Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians 2(1914): 39-40; Yellow Robe, "The Menance of the Wild West Show" 2(1914): 224-225; Wissler, Red Man Reservations, pp. 162-163; and Pine Ridge superintendent's narratives, September 19, 1916, and 1923 (Microfilm reel 106).

fact that many young adults defied these wishes. Luther Standing Bear, a Carlisle graduate and wild west show dancer, concluded that he did not come home from the boarding school very progressive. While readily learning American lifeways, he adamantly maintained his practice of Lakota songs, dances, and language.[51] Many former boarding school students and persons possessing American citizenship did too, and frequently danced in celebrations bordering the reservations.[52]

When local fairs were established in the white settlements encircling Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, parties of young men and families quickly took advantage of the opportunities to dance for food, personal enjoyment, and money accumulated by "passing the hat." In 1888, an Oglala contingent of 60 dancers under a Chief Little Hawk provided war dance entertainment to the Custer County Fair at Hermosa; twentyfour years later, larger groups under Chief Short Bull began performing dances annually at Edgemont as a part of the Fall River County Fair. Other contingents followed in succeeding years.[53] In 1912, the Frontier Days Festival was established at White River in the

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[51]Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 235.

[52]Rosebud superintendent's narrative, October 1, 1917 (Microfilm reel 118); and Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, 1922 (Microfilm reel 106).

[53]Black Hills Weekly Journal (Rapid City), September 21, 1888; Gilbert B. Taylor, Glimpses into Edgemont's Past (Lusk, Wyoming: The Lusk Herald, 1961), pp. 41-42, 105; and Mekeel, "A Discussion of Cultural Change," p. 280; and Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, 1911 (Microfilm reel 106).

recently opened northern portion of the Rosebud Reservation. Thousands of Sioux participated each year in four days of Omaha dancing, parades, and mock dawn attacks on the town.[54] Although many Sioux lands were open to settlement after 1889, drought and economic recession following the 1898 Spanish-American War retarded the economic growth necessary for the establishment of community fairs.[55]

Indian agents adopted the idea of encouraging reservation fairs modelled after the agricultural fairs as a means of stimulating farming and ranching activity. Rosebud fair was first proposed in 1890.[56] District fairs soon developed, with the addition of reservationwide fairs on Pine Ridge and Rosebud by 1911.[57] Under the direction of the agents, committees of

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[54]Mellette County News (White River), August 18, 1882, August 14, 1924 and July 30, 1925; Arthur L. Ryberg to author, White River, South Dakota, November, 1982; and Grace Strain to author, White River, South Dakota, November, 1982.

[55]Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, p. 233; and Taylor, Glimpses into Edgemont's Past, pp. 71-72, 105.

[56]Wright, Rosebud Agency report, August 26, 1890, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, p. 58; and Muriel H. Wright, "The Indian International Fair at Muskogee," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, 49(1971):14. The 1874 Muskogee fair, probably the first agricultural fair sponsored by a tribal group, later inspired several Oklahoma reservations to develop similar festivals.

[57]Hamilton and Hamilton, The Rosebud Sioux, pp. 175-186; Quick Bear to Brosius, October 25, 1907, ibid.; Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, 1911 (Microfilm reel 106); John H. Sterns, Rosebud superintendent's narrarive, August 24, 1912 (Microfilm reel 118); and Digmann to Lusk, August 28, 1911, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 73 folder 1).

representatives developed fairs featuring agricultural and livestock exhibits and awards as the premier events. To the displeasure of government officials, the Omaha dance with giveaways were included among the activities. Visiting between participants in the many developing Sioux reservation fairs also ensued.[58]

Reuben Quick Bear, an experienced celebration organizer who proclaimed an appreciation for progressive ideas, attempted a compromise. As chairman of the 1897 Rosebud Fourth of July, he added progressive elements such as a reading of the Declaration of Independence, and limited traditional activities to the Omaha dance and giveaways. After being accused of interfering with federal policy while chairing the 1905 Black Pipe District Fair, Quick Bear proposed that if permission for the erection of a dance hall would be granted, the agent's suggestion of not allowing participants or spectators under age fifty would be honored.[59]

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[58] Pine Ridge superintendent's narratives, 1911, 1912, and 1916, (Microfilm reel 106); Cato Sells, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 21, 1914, p. 26; Charles L. Davies, Rosebud superintendent's narratives, September 24, 1914 and August 14, 1916 (Microfilm reel 118); and Charles H. Burke, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1921, pp. 11-12.

[59] Hamilton and Hamilton, The Rosebud Sioux, pp. 187-188; and Quick Bear to Brosius, October 25, 1907, ibid.

To discourage fair activities detrimental to the government's objectives, the Indian Office issued additional dance related directives in 1913. Dates for all Sioux reservation fairs were synchronized to minimize visiting between reservations, and band concerts and athletic contests were introduced to diminish the popularity of the Omaha dance and rodeo events. The plan ended in apparent failure, as the Sioux love of celebration was blamed for the closures of the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservation fairs in 1924 and 1927 respectively.[60]

In urban America, the popularity of the show Indians continued unabated. Eastern city dwellers, confronted with congestion and conformity, nostaligically flocked in great numbers to the wild west shows which served as picturesque reminders of a romanticized rural past. With increasing competition from giant circuses and low cost rodeos, show managers featured spectacular entertainment. Frequently the Omaha dance and other Indian features were the most popular show events.[61]

The largest number of shows flourished during the early years of this century. Produced with limited capital, many shows were destined to play urban amusement parks and local fairs. The 101 Ranch Wild West, established in 1907, quickly joined the Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill shows as one of the major travelling extravaganzas employing Sioux dancers. In 1908, during a federal

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[60]Sells, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1914, p. 26; Rosebud superintendent's narrative, 1927 (Microfilm reel 11 and Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, June 30, 1930 (Microfil reel 107).

[61]Julian Ralph, "Behind the Wild West Scenes," Harper's Weekly 38 (August 18, 1894): 775; Westropp to Ketcham, October 16, 1909, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 63 folder 4); Russell, The Wild West, p. 68; Roth, "The 101 Ranch Wild West Show," pp. 422, 429-431; and wild west show posters, Circus World Museum.

investigation of exploitation charges, 24 Pine Ridge and 57 Rosebud Sioux were indentified as performing in a variety of New York City area shows and amusement parks. Reports note that performers with dancing paraphernalia easily secured employment and that those performing at Coney Island had the "time of their lives" by enjoying free access to all amusements and attractions.[62]

Events related to World War I also contributed to heightened dance activity. The customary honoring of returning war veterans provided new incentives for dancing. With renewed pride at Fourth of July and Armistice Day celebrations, Pine Ridge and Rosebud people welcomed soldier heros home in a fashion reminiscent of pre-reservation days. Under the direction of elder veterans of pre-reservation battles, the Omaha dance, mock battles of Americans verses Germans, the recognition of heroic deeds, and other ceremonies bestowing honor were reactivated. Repatriated soldiers and returned students were conspicuous among the participants in a series of seven dances commencing July 4, 1921. One hundred

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[62]Russell, The Wild West, p. 68; George E. Virgines, "The Miller's Great 101 Ranch," Golden West, 3 (1967): 38; and E.F. Merwin to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 29, 1908, July 3, 1908, and July 18, 1908, Indian Rights Association Papers (Microfilm reel 20).

horses were reportedly given away during the festivities.[63]

Commissioner Burke initially responded to superintendent's complaints of Sioux dancing activities by issuing further regulating instructions to the reservations of all tribes in April, 1921. Viewing dance popularity as a perversion of the government's reservation economic programs, he directed superintendents to continue using tact and persuasion in reaching an understanding and agreement with local residents. He further emphasized that the giveaway and other "savage and demoralizing" practices described in the dance regulations must be controlled by using the prescribed fines and prison penalties if necessary. Acknowledging public sentiments which recognized the inherent artistic and healthful qualities of native dance, Burke tempered this directive by specifically stating that native dance was not condemned, but needed extensive regulating.[64]

Because forbidden dance practices persisted both on and off the reservations, Burke convened a conference at Pierre,

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[63]Westropp to Ketcham, November 17, 1921, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 12 folder 3); Chronicles, p. 49, St. Francis Mission Records: ca. 1920 account of July Fourth veterans' ceremonies; Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, June 30, 1923 (Microfilm reel 106); Tom Holm, "Fighting a White Man's War: The Extent and Legacy of American Indian Participation in World War II," The Journal of Ethnic Studies 9 (1981): 69; and Powers, "Plains Indian Music and Dance," in Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty, eds., Anthropology on the Great Plains (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 219; and Charles H. Burke to The Herald (El Paso) and The Herald (Albuquerque), telegram, March 8, 1923, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 140 folder 12).

[64]Burke to superintendents, April 26, 1921, circular No. 1665, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 128 folder 13); Burke to The Herald (El Paso) and The Herald (Albuquerque), ibid.; and Kenneth R. Philip, John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), pp. 56-57.

South Dakota in October, 1922 for Sioux reservation missionaries and superintendents. Early the next year the commissioner included the detailed recommendations of these conferees in a supplement strengthening the earlier circular. The document recommended the prohibition of giveaways and other "immoral and degrading customs," and the extensive curtailment of all reservation native dancing. It was suggested that dancing be banned during the growing season, limited to once a month the remainder of the year, and prohibited by all under age fifty. In addition the directors of off reservation fairs would be persuaded to discontinue their inclusion of native dances. Superintendents were again directed to continue using tact and persuasion in implementing the order and were aided in this approach by an accompanying direct appeal from the commissioner to the Indian public.[65]

This latest attack on Indian cultural expression was met with an outcry from many tribes and a new generation of reformers concerned with the persecution of native culture. Of particular concern to many, including John Collier and the American Indian Defense Association, was the suppression of religious ritual among the Pueblo tribes. To address the crisis, a group of one

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[65]Jesse P. Williamson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 25, 1922, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 132 folder 4); Henry Grotegreers to William Hughes, October 26, 1922 Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 132 folder 5); Burke to superintendents, supplement to circular No. 1665, February 14, 1923, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 140 folder Burke to all Indians, accompaniment to circular No. 1665 supplement, February 14, 1923, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records (Box 14 folder 12); Philip, John Collier's Crusade, pp. 56-57; and Indian Rights Association Board of Directors, Forty-first Annual Report (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1923), pp. 42-43.

hundred prominent Indians and non-Indians reformers was convened. This committee concluded that all ancient rites were not to be curtailed. Yet when prolonged dances, giveaways, and commercialized shows interfered seriously with Indian welfare and progress, they should be discouraged. This compromise position sanctioned the continued federal regulation of native ritual, but acknowledged a narrowly defined right to native religious freedom.[66]

Following the recommendations on Indian cultural and religious freedom, mixed results were reported in securing dance order compliance. Reservation dance was effectively reduced to once a month and juvenile participation was thwarted. Beyond the reservations, however, dancing flourished at the celebrations of nearby towns and on the allotments of citizen tribesmen. Mixed blood agitators, elder traditionalists, elite easterners, tourists, and entrepreneurs were blamed for encouraging dancing. Returned students and outstanding church members were noted among the most active dancers. With the continued popularity of Omaha dancing, persistent application of tact and persuasion was still seen by superintendents as the most effective method of reducing dancing activity without encouraging surreptitious gatherings.[67]

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[66]Burke to The Herald (El Paso) and The Herald (Albuquerque), ibid.; Times (Washington), March 23, 1923; The Indian Problem, resolution of the committee of 100, document No. 149 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), p. 3; Hazel W. Hertzberg, The Search for an American Indian Identity (Syracuse: Syracuse Universit Press, 1971), pp. 201-203; Philip, ibid; and Indian Rights Associatio Forty-First Annual Report, ibid.

[67]Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, 1924 and E.W. Jermark, Pine Ridge superintendent's narrative, 1925 (Microfilm reel 106); and James H. McGregor, Rosebud superintendent's narrative January 22, 1924 and 1927 (Microfilm reel 118).

Through the succeeding decades, the emerging generations of twentieth century Lakota persisted in their practice of the Omaha dance. In spite of numerous acculturative pressures, including the force of dance regulations until 1934, and native involvement with school, church, and off reservation life, the dance continued to serve Lakota social needs. Now in secularized form devoid of many traditional religious features and frequently abreviated to cater to non-Indian audiences, Omaha dancing remained an important tribal institution and expression of cultural identity.

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